

Serm

2233

Price 2d

THE
SPEECH
OF
WILLIAM
EWART
GLADSTONE



IN THE
SENATE HOUSE
CAMBRIDGE
1859

THE UNIVERSITIES' MISSION TO CENTRAL AFRICA.
9 DARTMOUTH STREET. S.W.



Speech of Mr. Gladstone.

I WILL not detain you by dwelling upon the wrongs of Africa. I will only say this one word upon the question that relates to that unhappy region of the globe. The fate of Africa has been peculiarly this, that, after having suffered the extremity of the bitterness of woe and affliction, in almost every form that could be conceived, at the hands of Mohammedan conquerors, it has been reserved for her to undergo yet more cruel wrongs and yet more piercing sorrow, and yet more extreme degradation, at the hands of those who have called themselves Christians. We are here to consider, in connection with the special purpose that is set before us, the special machinery of which that purpose is to be maintained. I was glad indeed to hear that passage in the report where it is distinctly pointed out that the work of this Mission is not to be the exclusive work of the two Universities and their members. They are to be the nucleus from which every effort is to spring, around which it is the centre; but our hope and our confident expectation is, such is the strength of the case, such is the promise of the field that is open, that all England will be anxious and

ambitious to share in this goodly undertaking, the Universities themselves doing no more in regard to it than what it is their special function to do—namely, point out to their countrymen the way in which they ought to go.

But the resolution I have undertaken to second recalls by its language especially to our minds the union of the two Universities; and although I am sorry, and almost ashamed, to introduce what is personal in connection with such high and holy matters as are before us, yet I may be permitted at least on this day to say that it is a peculiar pleasure to me to feel that in the vestment which I wear by your favour the union of these two Universities is in some degree signified and represented. It will always remain among the most honourable and delightful recollections of my life, that the associations of reverence and affection with which every Oxford man must regard the University of Cambridge have been sealed on this particular occasion by an honour little indeed deserved,* but not on that account the less to be valued and remembered. But the union of these two Universities signifies much, indeed, that pertains alike to the present purpose, and to the welfare and happiness of England; and, if that union contain within itself a single

* The conferring of the title of D.C.L.

element of rivalry, it is a rivalry compatible with respect and affection—that kind of rivalry on which respect and affection thrive—and from which they draw a higher and a stronger vitality. They have before them a common work; they are heirs in common of recollections such as scarcely any other institution in the world can boast of; and at this day of what might be thought their extreme old age, they are, thank God, developing themselves with new vigour on every side, and promising from day to day, and from year to year to become less unequal to the enormous calls and demands which this mighty nation is continually making upon them. Never can they be united for a better, a higher or a wiser purpose than that in which they are at this moment combined. And, permit me to say, never can they be united for a purpose that is more entirely germane to their work; for if that work be in the first instance, as we hold that it is, the bulwark of the Christian faith in this land, yet he has a narrow view of the functions of the University who considers that to any single operation, though it be the greatest of all connected with the development of the mind of man, the office of the Universities can be confined. Their very name—I don't enter into the question as to its origin—their very name is at any rate a symbol

of the width and extension of the purposes which they contemplate. When you are asked here to undertake a Missionary work, you know well that you are invited to go forth as the ministers alike of spiritual and of temporal blessings, and that, as our Lord Himself, bringing the Word of Life and Immortality into the world, spent the greater portion of His time in direct ministry for the consolation and relief of human woes, so you, when you carry the Gospel into Africa, are not merely to provide the natives of that part of the world with the passport to Immortal Life, but are to give them a hope for themselves, for their children, for their descendants, for their race, for their country, of all that is dear to man in this world as well as in the next; so that when at length the light of civilisation shall begin to burn, they shall owe to Christianity, along with everything that belongs to another world, everything that belongs to this. Eminently fitting is it for the Universities to undertake to be in the van of such a work; and well it is that we should see that if the growth of civilisation, the immense development of this nation in all ranks, classes, and pursuits has rendered it far more difficult at this period of the world's history than it ever was before for the Universities to respond to the demands made upon them, yet at least

there will be no want of effort or of will ; but whether it be a question of extending their operations for the mental cultivation of other classes in England not hitherto within their reach ; or, whether it be a question of carrying forth the ministries of the Church beyond the limits of the country and beyond the limits of the empire, the Universities have still vigorous within them the desire to strain every nerve and to be the standard-bearers of their country before all the world in what is good and great.

But there is another reason why we must look upon the union of the Universities and the work of the Universities, as standing in a peculiar relation to such a work as this. Of the modes in which we can contribute to the extension of the Gospel, there are three especially—the contribution of funds, the contribution of prayers, and the contribution of personal sacrifices.

The contribution of funds is the lowest and meanest by far, and if even that meanest office cannot be performed aright, it will be greatly to the shame of this wealthy country. The contribution of prayers is a wider contribution, one within the power of all, and an office, though it be performed in silence, and not in the face of a great auditory like this, will yet, I trust, never be forgotten. But the greatest of all contributions is that which backs prayer with service,

that which renders up the highest of all sacrifices upon the altar of God, namely, the sacrifice of life, of strength, of wealth, of acquirements, of honours, of everything that is gratifying to the flesh and to the mind. This is the great treasure by means of which, and by means of which alone, the work that is before us can be successfully pursued. And where is it that we are to seek the means of furnishing that splendid contribution to the proper prosecution of the work, if it be not in the two Universities of England? Where, I will venture to ask even as between these two Universities, where is it that the plea may be urged with the most irresistible force if not within the precincts of that University which enjoys the honour of having formed the mind and character of Bishop Selwyn and which divides, and ever will divide, the affections of that illustrious man with his other home at Eton? It is the privilege, and is part of the reward, of such a man as Bishop Selwyn, that even after his personal presence has departed his name still remains a power in the place where it has once been known. There is an influence in the very mention of that name that is contagious, and it is in Cambridge more than in any other spot on the face of the globe that the force of that contagion must be felt. It may be that there are those here in the flower

of their years and in the fulness of their life, perhaps while tasting the first sweetness of successful exertion and of honourable reward—it may be that there are those here who, from the very recollection of that man, may even now be forming a resolution to brace themselves for the work of self-dedication to which he has shown them the way.

I have not the pleasure of forming a personal acquaintance with Dr. Livingstone, but yet having become acquainted with the results of his labours as he has given them to the world, I have watched his course and his progress, and I cannot refrain from adding my tribute to the expressions of admiration which his whole character has drawn from the willing hearts of his fellow-countrymen. But Dr. Livingstone gave, in my opinion, the most significant mark of the height of his intelligence, and of the true greatness of his mind, when he chose to make Oxford and Cambridge the great centre of his efforts at home. He knew well that there never was a more fruitful field; he knew well that though this country has much besides her Universities, yet no small part of her interior life is still nurtured within their sacred and venerable precincts; he knew well that though she is everywhere full of energy and power, yet no small part of that energy and power beat

within the hearts of these Universities, and especially of the youth of these Universities; he knew well that it was his duty to elevate himself, and to carry himself beyond the narrow limits of the particular organization to which he himself was immediately related. Desiring the propagation of the Gospel in Africa, he asked himself, "Where can I find the most powerful, the most durable, the most effective engine for the prosecution of that great work?" And his heart, his conscience, his intellect told him that he could not answer that question without giving a prominent place to the two Universities of England. Well, now, Dr. Livingstone is an example of a man who raises our idea of the age in which we live. That simplicity inseparable from all true grandeur, that breadth and force, that superiority to all worldly calls and enjoyments, that rapid and keen intelligence, that power of governing men, and that delight in governing them for their own good—in all this we have evidence of the great man. And the qualities of the man are the very qualities which commend themselves with resistless power to the young by whom we see this building crowded. For when I stand in this noble structure on this occasion I cannot stay for a moment to admire its magnificent proportions. It is not the Temple

that sanctifies the gold, it is not the Senate House of Cambridge, beautiful as the fabric is in itself, but it is the minds and hearts of those by whom it is filled that are deserving of attention. Let us render to Dr. Livingstone the full tribute which is due to him. Dr. Livingstone is a Christian, Dr. Livingstone is a missionary, Dr. Livingstone is a great traveller ; but Dr. Livingstone has also earned that great name which the admiration of all ages has consecrated—Dr. Livingstone is a hero. A great living poet, the great poet of this age—Alfred Tennyson—in a work which has taken its place in the deathless literature of the world, I mean his last work, has carried us back to the period of heroic deeds, of heroic characters ; but if the power which he possesses could have gone beyond what it has effected, could have gone beyond the almost living representation of those characters, and could actually have evoked them from the tomb, there is not one among those who have been represented in song who, if thus raised from the dead and permitted to walk among us, would not be ready to recognise as a brother the great traveller, Dr. Livingstone, and to acknowledge him amongst his worthiest companions.

I rose for the purpose of expressing the satisfaction, nay more than satisfaction, the

lively delight, which is felt in the sister University, in the sacred co-operation, for so I may call it, the sacred partnership in spirit in which on this occasion she finds herself engaged with the University of Cambridge, and that duty I have endeavoured imperfectly to perform. The sentiments which I feel towards that distinguished man with whom primarily this work originated, I have also striven to express, and I have in effect stated it to be one of my deepest convictions that such are the human materials, not the mere silver and gold, by means of which this great work must be prosecuted. I close what I had to say by simply and solemnly recommending each one present to put it to his own mind and conscience whether this special undertaking does not in itself combine with singular freedom from every possible opening for cavil or objection the presentation of every good and every hopeful prospect, of every solid advantage that can possibly attend any civilising or any Christianising scheme; and if that be so, let us not shrink from making honest efforts to support in act that which we have approved in words, using our acts as if by virtue of them we could prevail, but remembering their insufficiency and commending the support of the cause to the favour and protection of Almighty God.

